

CITY OF RENTON RULES FOR TREE CUTTING AND LAND CLEARING FOR COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL SITES WITHOUT AN ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENT PERMIT

Planning Division

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The handout addresses the most commonly asked questions and provides general information regarding tree cutting and vegetation management. Please see Section 4-4-130 of the Renton Municipal Code for more detailed information.

What types of tree cutting and clearing activities are prohibited in the City of Renton? The following tree cutting, land clearing, and ground cover management activities are prohibited:

- Cutting of “Landmark Trees” without a Routine Vegetation Management Permit. Landmark Trees are trees greater than 30” at chest height.
- Cutting of “Protected Trees”. Protected Trees are significant trees required to be retained as a condition of approval for a Land Development Permit.
- Removal of any landscaping required as part of a Land Development Permit.
- There shall be no tree cutting or land clearing on any site for the sake of preparing that site for future development unless a land development permit for the site has been approved by the City.
- Unless exempted by City Code Section 4-3-050, no tree cutting, land clearing, or groundcover management is permitted:
 - On portions of property with protected critical habitats, streams and lakes, shorelines of the State, wetlands, and their associated buffers
 - On protected slopes **(40% or more)**
 - In areas classified as very high landslide hazards
 - In “Native Growth Protection Easements”, areas, or tracts
- Tree topping unless the tree has been approved for removal.
- Removal of trees beyond the minimums required without a Routine Vegetation Management Permit.

Are there a minimum number of trees I am required to maintain on my commercially zoned property? Commercially zoned properties are not required to maintain a minimum number of trees onsite. However, compliance with the annual tree removal limits as well as the tree retention requirements (see Tree Retention Worksheet) for properties subject to a Land Development Permit is required. In addition, removal of any landscaping required as part of a Land Development Permit is prohibited unless a modified landscape plan is approved by the City of Renton.

Is a Permit Needed to Cut Trees on My Property? A Routine Vegetation Management Permit (RVMP) is probably required, although there are a few exceptions. Depending on your *lot's size* and provided your property would maintain the minimum number of trees required; you do **not** need a permit to remove the following numbers of trees if your property is:

- **10,000 sq. ft. or less in area:** Up to two (2) trees* may be removed in any twelve (12) month period, **and** up to four (4) trees* may be removed in any five (5) year period from a property.
- **Between 10,001 and 20,000 sq. ft. in area:** Up to three (3) trees* may be removed in any twelve (12) month period, **and** no more than six (6) trees* may be removed in any five (5) year period from a property.
- **20,001 square feet or more in area:** No more than six (6) trees* may be removed in any twelve (12) month period, **and** no more than twelve (12) trees* may be removed in any five (5) year period from a property.

**Except landmark trees (greater than a thirty inch (30") caliper) or protected trees (significant trees identified for retention as a condition of approval for a Land Development Permit) shall not be removed without a Routine Vegetation Management Permit.*

Are There Any Activities That Are Exempt From All The Requirements Of The Land Clearing And Tree Cutting Regulations? Yes, the following activities are entirely exempt from the regulations:

- You may remove dangerous trees which have been certified as hazard trees by a registered landscape architect, certified arborist, or the City.
- Site investigative work necessary for land use application submittals such as surveys, soil logs, percolations test, and other related activities. The work may include the use of mechanical equipment to perform site investigative work provided the work is conducted in accordance with the following:
 - Work shall not disturb any more the **five percent (5%)** of any protected sensitive area.
 - Disturbed areas shall be minimized and immediately restored.
 - A notice shall be posted on the site by the property owner or agent indicating that site investigative work is being conducted.
 - No investigative work shall commence without first notifying the Community and Economic Development Administrator.

When Is A Routine Vegetation Management Permit Required? If your property is vacant/undeveloped, you must obtain a Routine Vegetation Management Permit prior to:

- Trimming/topping trees, mowing/cutting of ground cover, or removal of vegetative debris.
- An approved land development permit is required in order to conduct any tree cutting or land clearing on any site for the sake of preparing that site for future development.
- Except where use of mechanical equipment is specifically listed as exempt, any person who uses mechanical equipment exceeding 27 horsepower on developed, partially developed, or undeveloped property must obtain a Routine Vegetation Management Permit prior to performing such work.

- A Land Development Permit or Routine Vegetation Management Permit is required for the removal of a landmark tree.
- Removal of trees beyond the minimum required to be retained with replacement.

When Is A Routine Vegetation Management Permit Not Required? Land clearing in conformance with the above restrictions is permitted for purposes of landscaping (i.e. *installation* of lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, and ground cover) provided that **no** mechanical equipment exceeding 27 horsepower is used.

How Do I Apply for a Routine Vegetation Management Permit? Applications are available at the Planning Division. Your completed application package must be accompanied by a processing fee of \$75.00 (plus a 3 percent technology fee). The application will be reviewed administratively and processing time will vary depending on the complexity of the project. If you disagree with the decision made regarding your permit application, you may appeal the decision to the City's Hearing Examiner. Approved permits are typically valid for one year.

When Is A Land Development Permit Required? You must obtain a Land Development Permit (i.e. a preliminary or final plat, building permit or site plan approval) and/or a Routine Vegetation Management Permit from the Planning Division prior to land clearing or tree cutting, unless your project is specifically exempt by Section 4-4-130C of the Renton Municipal Code.